

Marines OUTSIDE THE GATES

Local Communities Face Homefront Void of Marines

The Marines are gone, but not forgotten. Marine deployments in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom have had a tremendous impact on the daily lives of residents of local communities.

All three Saigon Sam's Military Surplus stores in Jacksonville, N.C., neighbor to Camp Lejeune, were positively affected by recent deployments. " (Marines) wanted desert stuff. Anything and everything with a desert pattern was a hot item," said owner Beedie Ruth Wensil. Business has slowly returned to normal after the pre-deployment surge in sales, she said.

Other businesses have not been as fortunate. Local dry cleaners and barbers depend on the patronage of Marines and their families. The Old Town Tailor Shop, a family-owned business in Jacksonville, has been altering Marines' uniforms since 1969. When Lejeune Marines deployed, business slowed significantly, according to the owners. They wait out the war in Iraq and pray for the Marines' safe return.

Economic prosperity and recession are not the only effects of the deployment. Despite — or maybe because of — the anti-war sentiments expressed by protesters across

Palms, Calif., adjacent to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, local businesses and organizations placed patriotic banners along the city's streets. Yellow ribbons, courtesy of military spouses, also line the street leading to the combat center.

Major League Baseball is also stepping up to bat, ready to show support for deployed troops. This year, standard pregame entertainment has a distinctly patriotic flair with tributes, emotional moments of silence and plenty of red, white, and blue. In Atlanta, the Braves urged fans to wear red, white, and blue clothing to show support for American troops in the Middle East. The St. Louis Cardinals invited representatives from each of the five services to throw ceremonial first pitches. Baltimore Orioles fans and players bowed their heads during a moment of silence for those who have died in the war on terrorism. At the Anaheim Angel's opener, 11 giant red and blue banners with white stars were unfurled over the outfield for the national anthem, played by a brass quintet from the Marine Band San Diego.

Thousands of Americans have also shown their support with mail. Unsolicited mail — care packages, donations and letters — to servicemembers forward deployed flooded the mail system. The Department of Defense eventually sent out a press release urging the general public to send electronic messages instead.

Candlelight vigils, prayers meetings, yellow ribbons, flags and banners are all signs that America has rallied around her Marines fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom and those who fought in Operation Enduring Freedom. **M**



▲ JACKSONVILLE, N.C. – Many businesses in the local communities are showing their support of the deployed Marines by offering free or discounted services for military families.

▼ Apr. 1, 2003

Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, 19, is rescued by U.S. special forces—Army Rangers, Navy SEALs and Marines—after 10 days of captivity in An Nasiriyah, Iraq. Military sources said Marines staged a decoy attack to allow the special forces unit to rescue Lynch from the hospital where she had been kept.

▼ Apr. 2, 2003

The doctors and corpsman of 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) help an Iraqi woman deliver her baby outside An Nasiriyah, Iraq.

▲ Apr. 2, 2003

Army and Marine forces crash through the Iraqi Republican Guard and are closing the ring around Saddam Hussein's regime. They are in commuting distance of downtown Baghdad.

▼ Apr. 4, 2003

Marines and Sailors from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) move further north of their current position in southern Iraq. During the trip, the convoy passed through the town of An Nasiriyah, where Marines from Task Force Tarawa recently saw some heavy fighting.

▼ Apr. 5, 2003

The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force continues to hammer toward Baghdad. Coalition forces now hold more than 6,500 Iraqi POWs.

▲ Apr. 5, 2003

Just over two weeks into Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. troops are operating in the heart of the Iraqi capital.

▲ Apr. 6, 2003

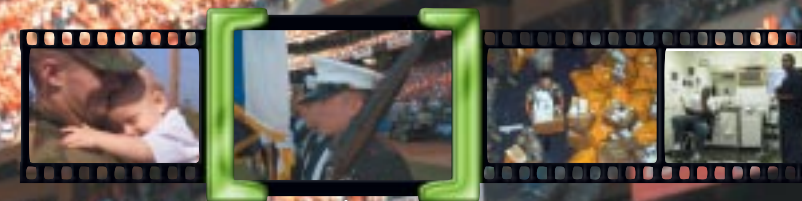
Marines expand northward on the eastern edge of Baghdad and secure major roads leading out of the Iraqi capital.

▼ Apr. 7, 2003

The Marines of Task Force Tarawa visit the town of Al Shomali, Iraq, to help the residents rebuild an elementary school that had been occupied by local members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party.

▲ Apr. 7, 2003

Marines, linked up with Army 5th Corps troops, attack along the Diyala River. This action has isolated the city of Baghdad.



▲ ANAHEIM, Calif. –

Cpl. Eduardo E. Soriano, 5th Battalion, 14th Marines, Seal Beach, Calif., takes part in a joint-service color guard prior to the start of the Anaheim Angels season opener March 30.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Chad McMeen





◀ **ABOARD USS NASSAU** – During Operation Enduring Freedom, Marines recieved an overwhelming show of support from Americans mailing care packages and letters from home. Marines from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), Command Element, sort through mail in the hanger bay of the USS Nassau (LHA-4) with the help of Marines from MEU Service Support Group 24 in September 2002.

▼ Apr. 8, 2003 ▼

Marines of I Marine Expeditionary Force, pushing up around the eastern rim of Baghdad, capture Rashid military airport.

▼ Apr. 9, 2003 ▼

Marines storm into Baghdad from the southeast and engage in a brief firefight with enemy forces near Baghdad University. They seize one of Saddam Hussein's palaces as well as the home of the Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

▼ Apr. 10, 2003 ▼

Marines, acting on a tip that leaders of the Saddam Hussein regime are trying to arrange a meeting on the north side of Baghdad, engage in fierce fighting with pro-Saddam forces at the Imam Mosque, Azimiyah Palace and the house of a Ba'ath Party leader.

▼ Apr. 13, 2003 ▼

Marines find seven U.S. servicemembers listed as missing or prisoners walking along a road near the city of Samarra. Two were suffering from gunshot wounds, but all could walk. An Iraqi tipped Marines advancing on Saddam Hussein's last stronghold of Tikrit with information that the Americans were on the road.

▼ Apr. 14, 2003 ▼

Marines encounter sporadic resistance as they move into Tikrit. Tikrit is the hometown of Saddam Hussein, and military officials said the area could be a tough nut to crack. However, the Marines enter the city easily and are extending their control.

▼ Apr. 16, 2003 ▼

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge lowers the nationwide threat level to "yellow" from "orange." A yellow level is listed as a "high" threat, orange is "elevated."

▲ Apr. 9, 2003 ▲

Coalition tanks enter Firdos Square in downtown Baghdad and Iraqi citizens join Marines in toppling a statue of Saddam Hussein.

▲ Apr. 12, 2003 ▲

Coalition forces in Iraq are using a specially created deck of 55 playing cards to identify the "most wanted" members of Saddam Hussein's regime.

▲ Apr. 14, 2003 ▲

Special operations forces capture terrorist Abu Abbas. Coalition special operators continue the hunt for other regime leaders.

▲ Apr. 17, 2003 ▲

Marines aid the special operations forces in the capture of Saddam Hussein's half brother and advisor, Barzan Ibrahim Hasan al-Tikriti, last night.

> **JACKSONVILLE, N.C.** – TaVon Brown, a Marine Barber Shop employee since 2001, takes his time cleaning up after a haircut. Fellow barber Jermaine Williams watches television, awaiting his next customer. In his four year as a barber here, Williams has never seen business this slow. “Every time another ship leaves, we get that much slower,” he said. “It’s like a ghost town.” Brown recently became a video game addict. “We need something to do to pass the time.”

Photo by Sgt. L.C. Pingree



▼ **SAN DIEGO** – Frustrated with the anti-military sentiment that has been much reported in the news, more than 4,000 residents rallied at a section of Miramar Road outside the north gate of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar March 23 for more than 6 hours.

Photo by Sgt. A. C. Strong



Apr. 19, 2003 ▼ Working with Iraqi citizens and the international community, Marines have significantly increased available services to the citizens of An Nasiriyah. A Civil Military Operations Center opens to facilitate the integration of support from international relief organizations, Iraqi citizens and Marines.

April 2003

Apr. 20, 2003 ▲ Central Command Headquarters in Qatar report a series of Iraqi arrests. Coalition forces are believed to have apprehended Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, his Minister of Higher Education and one of his top bodyguards.

Apr. 22, 2003 ▼ Army Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, Central Command deputy director of operations, briefs the media about the 3rd Infantry Division's discovery of a significant amount of money behind a false wall in Baghdad. The amount is believed to be in excess of 600 million U.S. Dollars in \$100 bills.

Apr. 23, 2003 ▲ Oil is flowing through Iraqi pipelines for the first time since the war started. With the help of Iraqi oil workers, coalition forces crank up an oil plant to get it pumping again near Basra, Iraq.



< **MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan** – Chely Wright, a country musician, performs at the MAC Dome Feb. 12, 2002, for the station community. Wright has played several concerts for the military in the past. “The very first show we were able to do after the (terrorist) attacks was Sept. 19, 2001, and it was in Washington, D.C.,” said Wright. “I found it difficult to get through the show, because I was getting emotional. I have the freedom to chase my country music dreams because of the dedication of the U.S. military, and it goes to a whole new level for me and the band when we get to play for the troops.”

Photo by Cpl. Colin Wyers

Apr. 24, 2003 ▼ President Bush announces “some evidence” suggests Saddam Hussein may have died in air strikes that opened Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Apr. 28, 2003 ▲ The number of U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf region will drop as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld announces following meetings with Qatari leaders, U.S. Central Command chiefs and Australian Defense Minister Robert Hill.

Apr. 27, 2003 ▼ After finishing up their role in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Marines and Sailors of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) are making preparations to head home from a more than eight-month long deployment. The MEU is conducting its end-of-deployment wash down at Camps Patriot and Doha in Kuwait.

Apr. 29, 2003 ▼ After successfully performing combat operations throughout southern Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) has returned to the Tarawa Amphibious Ready Group to prepare for follow on operations in the Central Command Area of Operations.

NEVER FORGOTTEN

In the global war on terror, the Marine Corps family has witnessed the loss of comrades and loved ones. As of April 23, nine Marines have lost their lives in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and 53 have died in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. *Marines* mourns with the families and friends who remain and honors our fallen Marines and all the servicemembers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in this war. They, and all who serve in the military, are a testament to the honor, courage and commitment of this generation of Americans.

There is no greater sacrifice than giving one's life for others. Our fallen brothers-in-arms will be sorely missed and never forgotten.

SEMPER FIDELIS

A MESSAGE FROM THE SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS



THE SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS



I am proud of the men and women who serve in the Marine Corps today. Our Marines continue to be the best and the brightest America has to offer. Today, we are embroiled in a global war against terrorism. From the Marines who were part of Task Force 58 and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to the Marines fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom, you are fighting that war and winning. On the front line and at home, you exemplify the indomitable fighting spirit Marines have displayed in every clime and place since 1775. More than half of you today, 68 percent, are on your first enlistment. Most have served for less than two years and many of you aren't old enough to buy a beer, which makes your sacrifices, your courage, your dedication all the more impressive.

But you are not the only ones sacrificing. Every Marine on the frontline leaves behind a family—parents, siblings, spouses and children. Know that while you fight, your families are not alone. More than 69,000 spouses and 105,000 children make up our greater Marine Corps family and we will continue to care for them. Bases and stations remain open while Marines are deployed; they and the family support services they offer will stay open for your families. Today's Marines families have more resources for assistance and information than ever before. I urge all family members to stay connected to the Family Team Building programs like L.I.N.K.S. and the Key Volunteer Network. Don't be afraid to ask questions of these support systems. Trust in these programs and allow them to work for you.

Have faith in your Marines; the training they have received has prepared them for the battles ahead. Have faith in their leadership; every leader is dedicated to bringing all Marines home to their families. And know, that when called on by America, our Marines will continue to do what Marines do best, win our nation's battles.

Semper Fidelis

Alford L. McMichael

A. L. McMICHAEL
14th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps



Photo by Staff Sgt. Bill Lisbon

SEMPER FIDELIS

